

This brochure is intended to assist consultants using the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) files as part of studies undertaken to comply with federal and state historic preservation regulations. It provides an overview of the information included in the SHPO files and a step-by-step checklist for searching for properties that are listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Access and Availability

The SHPO historic resources files are available through the Research Room at the Archives and History Center. This facility is open

Monday – Saturday, 8:45 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Research room staff are responsible only for making SHPO files available to consultants. They do not interpret information on historic resources or advise consultants on specific projects.

Consultants requiring assistance should schedule an appointment with an appropriate member of the SHPO staff by calling 803-896-6178.

Information Included in the SHPO Files

The SHPO files are mainly comprised of two sets of data: properties that are listed in the National Register and properties that have been recorded by survey and cultural resource management (CRM) projects.

National Register Files

The National Register files include information on properties that are listed individually or as part of a historic district. You can use the National Register paper files by requesting them in the Research Room, or you can view the records online at www.state.sc.us/scdah/hphistpropinfo.htm. A compiled list of National Register sites in South Carolina organized by county and date of listing is available in the Research Room and online at www.state.sc.us/scdah/hpnrhistoricplaces.pdf.

The quality of National Register nominations varies greatly. Many early nominations are

limited in detail, and property boundaries may be vague. Some historic district nominations lack a comprehensive inventory of contributing and non-contributing resources. Nominations for properties listed in recent years tend to be better documented and typically include greater historical and architectural detail. In general, however, the nomination for any listed property includes sufficient information for consultants conducting review and compliance studies to determine if a project will affect historic resources.

Survey Files

The survey files include information on historic properties documented by various projects conducted since the early 1970s. The files are organized by county and date of project. Summary information about survey projects is available on the Internet at www.state.sc.us/scdah/hpsurvey/countylist.htm and in the *Finding Aid to Records of the Survey of Historic Properties*, which is kept in the Research Room. For most projects, the summaries include the names of the USGS topographic maps on which historic properties were identified.

Information included in the survey files varies in quality and scope of coverage. Projects conducted from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s focused on surveying small towns, particularly downtown and older residential districts, and properties of obvious significance in rural areas. Beginning in 1986, the SHPO began conducting comprehensive countywide surveys in accordance with current methodological standards. The quality of documentation and coverage of recent survey projects is generally good, but in some cases important properties may have been overlooked. Properties located in inaccessible areas, for example, may not have been recorded. The survey files also include information from surveys conducted for review and compliance purposes from the late 1980s to the present.

Searching for Information: A Checklist

Consultants should use a three-step process for searching SHPO files:

✓ *Search the SHPO Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS).*

CRIS data may be accessed at a computer workstation in the Research Room. CRIS is the Geographic Information System (GIS) maintained by the SHPO and includes several major data layers. These include:

- all National Register-listed properties
- properties that the SHPO has determined eligible for the National Register since November 1998
- areas covered by Cultural Resource Management (CRM) surveys since November 1998
- properties identified by several countywide surveys completed since the late 1980s

✓ *If the CRIS indicates sites in or near the project area, check the survey and National Register files for more detailed information about the sites.*

If National Register properties were identified, ask to see the National Register files in the Research Room or view them online at www.state.sc.us/scdah/hphistpropinfo.htm. The files include the nomination forms, photographs, and maps. The paper files sometimes include copies of historical sources. If surveyed sites were identified, ask to see the project report, site forms, and maps.

✓ *Check the **Finding Aid to Records of the Survey of Historic Properties**.*

The *Finding Aid*, which is an index to surveys arranged by county, includes brief information about each survey conducted. It is available in the Research Room and online at www.state.sc.us/scdah/hpsurvey/countylist.htm. You will need to check the *Finding Aid* — even if no sites were found in the CRIS — to determine if survey material recorded prior to November 1998 (the date of the earliest surveys included

in CRIS) exists for the project area. If the *Finding Aid* indicates that there was a survey in the project area prior to November 1998, you should ask to see the project report, site forms, and maps for the survey.



A Word of Warning

Consultants should bear the following in mind when searching the SHPO files: simply because the files contain no information on National Register-listed or surveyed properties in a specific area does not mean that no historically significant properties exist. Most parts of the state have not been covered by a comprehensive survey, and in many counties, few sites have been listed in the National Register. Fieldwork is often necessary to determine if historic properties are located in or near an area that will be affected by a project.

Considerations in Using SHPO Files

- Historic resources in many parts of the state have never been surveyed. Less than half of the state's counties have been comprehensively surveyed. For many areas, the SHPO files contain limited or virtually no information.
- Much of the information in the SHPO files is no longer current. A property determined eligible for the National Register ten years ago, for example, may have since lost its integrity and historical character, rendering it ineligible. At the same time, properties that were less than fifty years old at the time of a survey may have since become eligible for the National Register. Fieldwork is often necessary to confirm, update, or add to the information in the SHPO files.
- Properties included in the SHPO survey files are not necessarily significant. To be surveyed, a property must be at least fifty years old and retain some of its historic appearance. No other requirements exist. Most surveyed properties are not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Data from the SHPO files should not be publicized without consent. Looting of archaeological sites for profit and vandalism of abandoned buildings are serious, ongoing problems.
- Data from the SHPO files should not be redistributed. Properties are continually added to the survey files, typically at a rate of 1,000 annually, and new listings to the National Register are made frequently. Consultants are responsible for checking the SHPO files for the most current information.
- The SHPO files mainly include information on above-ground structures and historic sites. CRM reports and archaeological site forms are available at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology at 1321 Pendleton Street in Columbia, SC, telephone 803-777-8170.

